

Standout Store

ZOMBIE BURGER

DES MOINES, IOWA

Though zombies may crave human flesh, it's the humans doing the devouring at Zombie Burger. Each week, the eatery orders 2,300 pounds of ground beef, 7,500 pounds of raw potatoes for fresh-cut fries, and 7,500 specially-baked Zombie Burger buns to serve upward of 7,000 guests.

Any of the store's two dozen regular burger combinations, such as the Trailer Trash Zombie (American cheese, fried pickle, chicken fried bacon, cheese curds, and ranch) and the Juan of the Dead (green chile, cheese croquette, Monterey Jack cheese, caramelized onion, and chipotle mayo), can be ordered with a 4-ounce "bashed" burger patty, chicken breast, veggie patty, or Portobello mushroom.

The adjacent Drink Lab, meanwhile, carries the same menu and post-apocalyptic décor alongside profit-driving alcoholic drinks in a full-service arrangement.

Managing partner Paul Rottenberg, who teamed with noted Des Moines chef George Formaro and Jeremy Reichart to open Zombie Burger in August 2011, discusses the upstart concept's rapid rise.

What brought Zombie Burger to life?

George and I had partnered on other restaurants, largely upscale spots around town, and we kept talking about a burger concept. We started out thinking along the lines of Shake Shack, but that quickly evolved. George is versed on all things zombie and continued championing a horror-themed concept. After six months, he finally sold me on the idea.

We got a 5,000-square-foot space in Des Moines' historic East Village, and the response immediately exceeded our expectations. Within two months, we had to take over an additional 1,100 square feet solely dedicated to a prep kitchen.

What inspired the ambitious, inventive menu?

Given George's abilities, people expected us to do something more dynamic than the standard burger joint. George started having fun, exploring how imaginative we could get with certain combinations. That brought about some wild pairings, and we've continued to push the limits with our burger



of the week, which has included elements from pineapple to pork belly.

How did you feel about saturation in the better-burger segment?

We thought we had a good shot here with George. There was a lot of interest in what he could do with burgers, but I'll confess that I had no idea that mixing burgers and zombies would be such an explosive idea. A unique

environment and real distinctive food wins out.

What's next for Zombie Burger?

We've gotten an awful lot of requests for Zombie Burgers in other markets and interest in franchising, which is a real possibility. Our store is in a brand new building with straightforward retail space; that gives us confidence that this can be duplicated.

IN BRIEF

Guy Fieri Launches College-Focused Fast-Casual Concept

The Food Network icon Guy Fieri is getting his feet wet in the fast-casual sphere with the opening of his newest concept, Guy Fieri On Campus (GFOC).

The restaurant chain was created in collaboration with Sodexo and will pop up on college campuses around the country. The concept will feature menu fare with hints of Fieri's signature Italian, Mexican, and Asian flavors.

Under the partnership, Fieri and Sodexo will unveil at least 15 GFOC locations over the next five years.

Caribou Coffee to Appear in Chicago Grocery Chain

Caribou Coffee, the second-largest company-operated premium coffee chain in the U.S., announced that it will be partnering with leading Chicago-area grocery chain Jewel-Osco to expand its retail and commercial footprint in the region.

Through the partnership, Caribou will not only offer its coffee products to consumers who shop in Jewel-Osco, but it will also introduce its premium packaged coffee throughout the chain's stores. The offerings include a broad spectrum of roasts and blends that provide shoppers with more quality options.

Consumers Unhappy With Brands' Ethnic Offerings

A new study from market research firm Technomic shows that only 23 percent of limited-service consumers are satisfied with the availability of ethnic offerings in restaurants.

In addition, one-third of customers surveyed say there are many ethnic items they would like to order in restaurants but are unable to find.

The research reveals opportunities for brands to differentiate their menus and gain market share with globally inspired offerings.